

THE
CHARACTER
 OF
 A Coffee-House,
 WITH THE
SYMPTOMES
 OF A
TOWN-WIT.

With Allowance, April 11th. 1673.



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CHURCH

III

YMP TOMES



THE CHARACTER OF A Coffee-House, &c.

A Coffee-House is a *Lay-Conventicle*, Good-fellowship turn'd *Puritan*, Ill-husbandry in *Masquerade*, whither people come, after *Topping* all day, to purchase, at the expence of their last penny, the repute of *sober Companions*; a *Rota-Room* that (like *Noah's Ark*) receives Animals of every sort, from the precise *diminutive Band*, to the *Hectoring Cravat* and *Cuffs in Folio*; a *Nursery* for training up the smaller Fry of *Virtuosi* in confident *Tattling*, or a *Cabal of Kittling Criticks* that have only learnt to *Spit and Mew*; a *Mint of Intelligence*, that to make each man his *penny-worth*, draws out into petty parcels, what the Merchant receives in *Bullion*: He that comes often saves *two pence* a week in *Gazets*, and has his *News* and his *Coffee* for the same charge, as at a *three penny Ordinary* they give in *Broth* to your *Chop of Mutton*; 'tis an *Exchange* where *Haberdashers of Political small wares* meet, and mutually abuse each other, and the *Publique*, with bottomless stories, and headless notions; the *Rendezvous of idle Pamphlets*, and persons more idly imployd to read them; a *High Court of Justice*, where every little Fellow in a *Chamlet-Cloak* takes upon him to transpose *Affairs* both in *Church and State*, to shew reasons against *Acts of Parliament*, and condemn the *Decrees of General Councils*; 'Tis impossible to describe it better than the most ingenious of the *Latine Poets* has done it to our hand, and that so excellently, we cannot but transcribe it:

“ Unde quod est usquam quamvis Regionibus absit
 “ Inspicitur, penetratque cavas vox omnis ad Aures
 “ Nocte Dièque patet, Tota est ex Aresonanti
 “ Tota Fremit, Vocèsque refert, Iteratque quod Audit,
 “ Nulla Quies intus, nullàque silentia parte
 “ Nec tamen est Clamor, sed parva Murmura Vocis
 “ Qualia de Pelagi (si quis procul audiat) undà
 “ Esse solent, qualemve sonum cum Jupiter atras
 “ Increpuit nubes, Extrema Tonitrua redunt;
 “ Atria Turba tenet, veniunt Læve vulgus, Eun' quo
 “ Mistàque cum veris passim Commenta vagantur,
 “ Millia Rumorum, confusàque verba volutant;
 “ Equibus Hii vacuas Implent sermonibus Aures
 “ Hi narrata ferunt aliò, Mensuràque ficti
 “ Crescit, & Auditis aliquid novus Adjicit Author
 “ Illic Credulitas, Illic temerarius Error

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"*Vanâque Letitia est, Conſternatique Timores*
 "*Seditioque recens, dubioque Authore Suſurri*
 "*Ipsa quid in Cælo Rerum, Pelagique geratur*
 "*Et Tellure videt, Totumque Inquiri in Orbem.*

Thus ſtriſtly Engliſht.

Here all *that's done*, though far remote, appears,
 And in cloſe whiſpers penetrates our ears;
 As built of *Brass*, the *House* throughout reſounds,
 Reports things *heard*, and every word rebounds.
 No reſt within, nor *ſilence*, yet the noiſe
 Not loud, but like a hallow murmuring voice;
 Such as from far by Rowling Waves is ſent,
 Or like *Joves* fainting Thunder almoſt ſpent:
 Hither the *idle vulgar* come and go,
 Carrying a thouſand Rumours to and fro;
 With *ſtale reports* ſome liſtning ears do fill,
 Some *coyn freſh tales*, in words that vary ſtill;
 Lies mixt with Truth, all in the telling grows,
 And each *Relator* adds to what he knows:
 Here dwells raſh error, light credulity,
 Sad panick fears, joys built on vanity;
 New rais'd ſedition, ſecret whiſperings,
 Of unknown Authors, and of doubtful things:
 All Acts of Heav'n and Earth it boldly views,
 And through the ſpacious World enquires for *News*.

The Room ſtinks of *Tobacco* worſe than Hell of *Brimſtone*, and is as full of ſmoak as their Heads that frequent it, whoſe humours are as various as thoſe of *Bedlam*, and their diſcourſe oft-times as *Heatheniſh* and dull as their *Liquor*; that *Liquor*, which by its looks and taſte, you may reaſonably gueſs to be *Pluto's Diet-drink*; that *Witches* tipples out of *dead mens Skulls*, when they ratifie to *Belzebub* their *Sacramental Vows*.

This *Stygian-Puddle-feller*, was formerly notorious for his ill-favour'd *Cap*, that Ap'd a *Turbant*, and in *Conjunction* with his *Antichriſtian face*, made him appear perfect *Turk*: But of late his *Wiſe* being grown acquainted with Gallants, and the provocative virtue of *Checolet*, he finds a *Broad-brim'd Hat* more neceſſary: When he comes to fill you a Diſh, you may take him for *Guy Faux* with a dark *Lantern* in's hand, for no ſooner can you taſte it, but it ſcalds your throat, as if you had ſwallowed the *Gunpowder-Treſon*: though he ſeem never ſo demure, you cannot properly call him *Phariſee*, for he never waſtes either out or inſide of his *pots* or *diſhes*, till they be as black as an *Uſurers Conſcience*; and then only ſcraping off the contracted *Soot*, makes uſe of it, in the way of his Trade, inſtead of *Coffee-powder*; their taſte and virtue being ſo near of Kin, he dares deſie the verieſt *Coffee-Critick* to diſtinguiſh them: Though he be no great *Traveller*, yet he is in continual *motion*, but 'tis only from the fire ſide to the Table, and his *tongue* goes infinitely faſter than his feet, his grand ſtudy being readily to eccho an answer to that threadbare queſtion, *What News have you Maſter?* Then with a grave whiſper (yet ſuch as all the Room may hear it) he diſcovers ſome myſterious *Intrigue* of State told him

him last night by one that is Barber to the Taylor of a mighty great Courtiers man, relating this with no less formality than a young Preacher delivers his first Sermon, a sudden Hickup surprizes him, and he is forced twenty times to break the thread of his Tale with such necessary Parenthesis's, Wife, sweep up those loose Corns of Tobacco, and see the Liquor boil not over: He holds it as part of his Creed, that the Great Turk is a very good Christian, and of the Reformed Church, because he drinks Coffee, and swears that Pointings for celebrating its virtues in doggerel deserves to be Poet Laureat: yet is it not only this hot Hell-broth that he sells, for never was Mountebank furnish'd with more variety of poysonous drugs, then he of liquors, Tea and Aromaticque for the sweet-tooth'd Gentleman, Betony, and Rosade for the addle-headed Customer, Back-recruiting Chocoleet for the Consumptive Gallant, Herefordshire Redstreak made of rotten apples at the three Cranes, true Brunswick-Mum brew'd at S. Katherines, and Ale in penny Mugs, not so big as a Taylors Thimble.

As you have a bodge-podge of Drinks, such too is your Company, for each man seems a Leveller, and ranks and files himself as he lists, without regard to degrees or order; so that oft you may see a silly Fop, and a worshipful Justice, a griping Rook, and a grave Citizen, a worthy Lawyer, and an errant Pick-pocket, a Reverend Nonconformist, and a Canting Mountebank; all blended together, to compose an Oglio of Impertinence.

If any Pragmatick, to shew himself witty or eloquent, begin to talk high, presently the further Tables are abandon'd, and all the rest flock round (like smaller birds to admire the gravity of Madge-Howlet) They listen to him a while with their mouths, and let their Pipes go out, and Coffee grow cold, for pure zeal of attention, but o'th' sudden fall all a yelping at once with more noise, but not half so much harmony as a Pack of Beagles on the full Cry, to still this bawling, Upstarts

Captain All-man-sir, the man of mouth, with a face as blustering as that of Eolus and his four Sons in Painting, and a voice louder than the speaking Trumpet, he begins you the story of a Sea-fight; and though he never were further by water than the Bear-garden, or Cuckolds-Haven, yet having pyrated the names of Ships and Captains, he perswades you himself was present, and performed Miracles; that he waded Knee-deep in blood on the upper Deck, and never thought serenade to his Mistress, so pleasant as the Bullets whistling; how he stopt a Vice-Admiral of the Enemies under full sail, till she was boarded, with his single arm instead of Grappling Irons, * and pufte out with his breath a Fire-ship that fell foul on them. All this he relates sitting in a Cloud of Smoak, and belching so many common Oaths to vouch it, you can scarce guess whether the real Engagement, or his Romancing account of it, be the more dreadful: However, he concludes with railing at the Conduct of some Eminent Officers, (that perhaps he never saw) and protests, had they taken his advice at the Council of War, not a Sail had escap'd us.

* Vide Justin. l. 2.
de Cynagiro.

He is no sooner out of breath, but another begins a Lecture on the Gazette, where finding several Prizes taken, he gravely observes, if this Trade hold, we shall quickly rout the Dutch Horse and Foot by Sea: He nick-names the Polish Gentlemen where ever he meets them, and enquires, whether Gayland and Taffaletta be Lutherans or Calvinists: Stilo Novo he interprets a vast new

Stile or *Turn-pike* erected by his Electoral Highness on the borders of *Westphalia* to keep Mounſieur *Turenne* Cavalray from falling on his retreating Troops; He takes words by the sound without examining their sense: *Morea* he believes to be the Country of the *Moors*, and *Hungary* a place where famine alwayes keeps her Court, nor is there any thing more certain, than that he made a whole Roomful of Fops, as wise as himself, spend above two hours in searching the *Map* for *Aristocracy* and *Democracy*, not doubting but to have found them there, as well as *Dalmatia* and *Croatia*.

Next Seignior *Poll* takes up the Cudgels, that speaks nothing but *Designs*, *Projects*, *Intrigues*, and *Experiments*, One of those in the old Comedian, *Plautus*, *Sciunt id quod in Aurem Rex Regina dixerit, Quid Juno confabulata est cum Jove, Sciunt quæ neque futura neque facta sunt, tamen illi sciunt, &c.* All the Councils of the German *Diet*, the *Romish Conclave*, and *Turkish Divan*, are as well known to him as his *Landresses Smock*. He kens all the Cabals of the Court to a hairs breadth, and (more then an hundred of us do,) which Lady is not painted; you would take his mouth for a *Limbeck*, it distills his words so nigardly, as if he was loath to enrich you with lies, of which he has yet more plenty than *Fox*, *Stowe*, and *Hollingshead* bound up together; He tells you of a Plot to let the *Lyons* loose in the Tower, and then blow it up with *white-powder*; of five hundred and fifty *Jesuits* all mounted on *Dromedaries* seen by Moonshine on *Hampsteadheath*, and a terrible design hatch'd by the Colledge of *Doway*, to drain the narrow Seas and bring *Popery* over *dry shod*; besides he has a thousand inventions dancing in his brain-pain; an *Advice-boat* on the Stocks, that shall go to the *East-Indies*, and come back again in a *Fortnight*, a trick to march *under water*, and bore holes through the *Dutch-ships* Keele with *Augurs*, and *sinck* them, as they ride at Anhor, and a most excellent pursuit to catch *Sun-beams*, for making the Ladies new fashioned *Towns*, that *Poets* may no more be damn'd for telling lies about their *Curls* and *Tresses*.

But these are puny *Pugs*, the *Arch-Devil*, wherewith this *Smoke-hole* is haunted, is the *Town-wit*, one that playes *Rex* where ever he comes, and makes as much hurry as *Robin Goodfellow* of old amongst our *Granams Milk-bouts*; He is a kind of a *Squib* on a Rope; a *meteor* compos'd of Self-conceit and noise, that by *blazing* and *crackling* engages the wonder of the ignorant, till on a sudden he vanishes and leaves a *Stench*, if not *infection* behind him; he is too often the stain of a good Family, and by his debauch'd life blots the noble Coat of his Ancestors, A *wilde unback'd Colt*, whose brains are not half cooled, indebted for his cloaths to his Tailor, and for his wit (such as it is) to his Company: The School had no sooner dued him with a few superficial besprinklings, but his *Mother's indulgence* posted him to Town for *Genteeler breeding*, where three or four wilde Companions, half a dozen bottles of *Burgundy*, two leaves of *Leviathan*, a brisk encounter with his *Landlords Glasswindowes*, the charms of a little *Mist*, and the sight of a new Play dub'd him at once both a *Wit* and a *Hero*, ever since he values himself mainly for *understanding the Town*, and indeed knows most things in it, that are not worth knowing: The two Poles whereon all his discourses turn are *Atheism* and *Bawdry*; Bar him from being prophane or obscene, and you *cramp* his Ingenuity, which forthwith *Flags* and becomes *useless*, as a meet *Common Lawyer* when he has cross'd the *Channel*.

He is so refractory to *Divinity* that *Morality* it self cannot hold him, he affirms

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firms humane Nature knows no such things as *principles* of Good and evil, and will swear *all women are whores*, though his *Mother and Sister* both stand by : Whatever is sacred or serious he seeks to render Ridiculous, and thinks Government and Religion fit objects for his *idle* and fantastick *Buffoonry*, his *humor* is proud and assuming, as if he would palliate his ignorance by *Scoffing* at what he understands not, and therefore with a *vert* and *pragmatique* scorn depreciates all things of nobler moment, but most passionately affects *pretty à la mode* words, And is as covetous of a *New Song* or *Ayre*, as an Antiquary of *Cato's Statue* with ne'r an arm, and but half a nose, These keep him alwaies imployd, and fill up the *Grotesco's* of his conversation, whilst with a stately Gallantry once in every half hour he *Combes out his Wig*, *Carreens* his breeches, and new marshalls his *Garniture*, to the Tune of *Methinks the poor Town has been troubled too long*.

His mind used to *whistle* up and down in the levities of Fancy, and effeminated by the childish *Toying's* of a rampant imagination finds it self indisposed for all solid imployment, especially the serious exercises of *Piety* and *Virtue*, which begets an aversion to those *Lovely Beauties*, and that prompts him on all occasions to expose them as ridiculous and vain : Hence by degrees he comes to abuse *Sacred Scripture*, makes a mock of eternal Flames, Joque on the venerable Mysteries of Religion, and in fine, scoffe at that *All Glorious and Tremendous Majesty* before whom his brother *Wits* below tremble ; Tis true he will not confess himself *Atheist*, yet in his heart the Fool hath said it, and boasts aloud that he holds his *G spel* from the *Apostle of Malmsbury*, though it is more than probable he ne'r reads, at least understood *ten leaves* of that *unlucky Author* ; Talk of *Witches* and you Tickle him, speak of *Spirits* and he tels you he knowes none better than those of *Wine*; name but *Immaterial Essence*, and he shall shout at you as a dull Fop incapable of sense, and unfit for Conversation ; Nor is he ever better pleas'd than when he can here hedge in some young *raw Divine* to *Bulbait* with scurrility and all kind of profaneness.

By means of some small scraps of *learning* matcht with a far greater stock of Confidence, a voluble Tongue, and bold delivery, he has the ill-luck to be celebrated by the vulgar; for a man of *Parts*, which opinion gains credit to his Insolences, and sets him on further extravagances to maintain his Title of a *Wit* by continuing his practice of *Fooling*, whereas all his mighty parts are sum'd up in this Inventory. " *Imprimis*, A *pedling way* of Fancy, a *Lucky hit at Quibbling*, " now and then an *odd metaphor*, a conceited *Trope*, a ridiculous *Simile*, a *wilde* " *fetch*, an unexpected *Inference*, a *Minick Gesture*, a pleasing *knack* in humour- " ing a Tale, and lastly an irresistible Resolution to speak *Last*, and never be " *dabst* out of Countenance :

By these *Arts* dexterously manag'd he engrosses a vast *Repute*, The grave Citizen calls him shrewd man, and notable *Headpiece*, The *Ladies* (we mean the things so called of his acquaintance) vote him a most accomplished *Senileman*, and the Blades swear he is a *Walking Comedy*, the only *Merry Andrew* of the Age, that scatters *Wit* wherever he comes, as *Beggars do Lice*, or *Muskcats perfumes*, and that *nothing in Nature* and all that can compare with him.

You would think he had got the *Lullian Art*, for he speaks *Extempore* on all subjects, and ventures his words without the Relief of *Sense* to second them, his thoughts start from his *imagination*, and he never troubles himself to Examine their decency, or solidity by Judgement. To discourse him seriously

is to read the *Ethicks* to a *Monkey*, or make an Oration to *Caligula's Horse*, whence you can only expect a *weehee* or *Jadish spurr*; alter the most convincing Arguments, if he can but muster up one plausible *jeque* you are routed, For he that understood not your *Logick*, apprehends his droll, and though *Syllogismes* may be answered, yet *Jests* and loud laughter can never be confuted, but have more sway to degrade things with the *unthinki'g crowd*, than *demonstrations*; There being a Root of envy in too many Men, that invites them to applaud that which Exposés and villifies what they cannot comprehend; He pretends great skill in curing the *Tetter* and *Ring-worms* of State, but blows in the sores till they Rangle with his poisonous breath, he shoots *libels* with his forked tongue at his Superiors and abuses his dearest *Friends*, chusing to forfeit his neck to the *Gibbet*, or his shoulders to the *Patoon* rather than lose the driest of his idle *Quibbles*; In brief he is the *Jack-pudding of Society*, a *fleeing Buffoon*, a better kind of *Ape* in the judgement of all *Wise-men*, but an incomparable *Wit* in his own.

Thus have we led you from *Board to Board*, like the fellow in the Tower, to shew you *strange Beasts* wherewith this place is sometimes frequented. To take now a *farewel view* of the House will be difficult, since it is always shifting Scenes and like *O Brasil* (the *Inchanted Island*) seldom appears twice in a posture; The *wax Candles* burning, and low devout whispers sometimes strike a kind of Religious Awe, whilst the modish Gallant sweats so oft by *Iesu*, an Ignorant Catholick would take it for a Chappel, and think he were saying our Ladies *Placet*; In some places the *Organs* speak it a Musick Room, at others a pair of *Tables and draught board*, a small gaming house; on a sudden it turns *Exchange*, or a Warehouse for all sorts of *Commodities*, where fools are drawn in by inch of *Candles* as we betray and catch *Larks* with a *Glass*; The *Bully-Rook* makes it his *Bubbling pond*, where he angles for *Fops*, singles out his man, insinuates an acquaintance, offers the wine, and at next Tavern sets upon him with *high Fullums*, and plucks him: The *Ingeniuss* use it for an after *Rehearsal*, where they bring *Plays* to Repetition, sit each *Scene* examine every *uncorrected Line*, and damn beyond the fury of the *Rota*, whilst the *incognito Poet* out of an overweening affection to his *Infant Wit*, steals in muffled up in his *Cloake*, and sliely *Evesdrops* like a *mendicant Mother* to praise the pretyness of the *Babe* she has newly pawm'd on the *Parish*.

But 'tis time to be gone, who knows what *Magick* may be a working, For, behold! the *Coffee-Powder* settles at the bottome of our dish in form of a most terrible *Saracens Head*. For a parting blow then give us leave to unbend a little, and say,

A *Coffee-House* is a *Phanatique Theatre*, a *Hot-House* to flux in for a clapt understanding, a *Sympathetical Cure* for the *Gonorrhea* of the Tongue, or a *resin'd Bandy-House*, where *Illegitimate Reports* are got in close *Adultery* between *Lying lips* and *itching Ears*.

Si quid novisti rebus Candidus Imperti

FINIS.

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